



MAY 2010

THE CHP AWARENESS NEWSLETTER FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

AWARENEWS

20th Anniversary!
of the ADA



EVERYONE KNOWS ALBERT

By Lieutenant Christopher Sherry,
#14995
Contra Costa Area



Over the years, hundreds of California Highway Patrol (CHP) employees have worked at Hayward Area. While there may be many different memories and experiences, everyone who has worked there has one thing in common. They have all met Maintenance Worker Albert Riviera, #A06148. Like most employees, Albert works hard, does his job, and is proud to be a departmental employee. Albert has Cerebral Palsy, but this does not prevent him from being an outstanding employee. In fact, Albert has been a pillar of professionalism at Hayward Area for 27 years.

Cerebral Palsy is a broad term used to describe a group of chronic movement or posture disorders. "Cerebral" refers to the brain, while "Palsy" refers to a physical disorder, such as a lack of muscle control. Cerebral Palsy is not caused by problems with the muscles or nerves, but rather with the brain's ability to adequately control the body. Cerebral Palsy can be caused by injury during birth, although sometimes it is the result of later damage to the brain. Symptoms usually appear in the first few years of life and once they appear, they generally do not worsen over time. More than half a million Americans have Cerebral Palsy, and an additional 4,500 infants and children are diagnosed yearly.

Albert was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy when he was six months old. He attended a special school for disabled persons from preschool through 8th grade. While growing up, he endured a lot of teasing due to his speech and body movements. Albert laughed as he stated, "I was teased a lot. Sometimes disabled children were my worst teasers!" Albert attended Arroyo High School in San Leandro. Upon graduating, he entered the workforce as a janitor for Goodwill Industries in Oakland. Albert worked hard at his duties and was promoted to supervisor after only three years. As the supervisor, he was in charge of 18 janitors at two different buildings. He worked for Goodwill Industries for five years.

Albert's sister, retired Office Assistant Anita Valteau, #A03930, worked at Hayward Area as the 415 clerk. She encouraged Albert to apply for a janitorial position with the State of California in hopes he would be hired by the CHP. Albert applied and his name was added to the hiring list. His name stayed on the list for two years until he was offered a job at the California School for the Deaf in Fremont. While considering that position, Albert received

notification that there was an opening with the CHP at Hayward Area. Albert quickly responded to that offer and joined the CHP family in 1983. He has worked at Hayward Area ever since. As Albert walks the halls, he looks at the framed photos of the Area's prior commanders that line the hallway. Proudly, he boasts, "I've worked with each one of them." Albert has also witnessed promotions of many officers who worked at Hayward Area, including our current Commissioner, Joe Farrow, #9486.

In 2003, Albert was promoted to Maintenance Worker. Albert's skills and "teamwork spirit" are appreciated by everyone in the office. As a member of the Area's Occupational Safety Committee, he continues to make excellent recommendations and contributions towards employee safety. Being the longest working employee at Hayward Area, he has seen numerous wrecked patrol vehicles come through the back lot. He regularly tells the new officers that vehicles can be replaced, but their bodies can not.

In 1994, Albert was selected by his prior commander, Captain Joe Farrow, as a nominee for the Governor's Employee Safety Award. In the memorandum nominating Albert for the award, Captain Farrow wrote, "Albert is a very conscientious and dedicated employee who demonstrates a continuing willingness to assist co-workers without regard to rank. As an infant, he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and has overcome many obstacles with favorable outcome. Even with his obvious physical challenges, it has never impeded his ability to accomplish a task, offer assistance, or to provide a safe working environment for everyone. He is very aware of the many hazards as it relates to occupational safety, and eliminates those potential unforeseen incidents without being told. He has been an instrumental force in reducing and eliminating the number of injuries sustained to employees and the public in or around the office." Albert received the award in Sacramento and thoroughly enjoyed the day with his family. In 2002, Albert was chosen as the Hayward Area Employee of the Year at the Golden Gate Division Employee Appreciation Day.

Working for the California Highway Patrol has been rewarding for Albert. He has made many friends. When talking about relationships, Albert said that respect is the name of the game. "I give people my respect, and I appreciate it when they give me their respect." While reflecting back on his career, Albert said, "I have enjoyed my job a lot. I have enjoyed the people. I'd do it all over again." Albert continues to inspire many of us.



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AUTISM IN AMERICA TODAY

By: Kathy Carstons, #A11889

When my 17 year old son, Matthew, was eight years old, he was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, a form of high functioning Autism. At that time, the diagnostic rate of 1 in 500 births had some form of Autism Spectrum disorder. In the last ten years, the rate has steadily increased with new diagnosis and treatment to the current rate of 1 in 100 births diagnosed with some form of Autism, according to the Centers for Disease Control Prevention.

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first two years of life, and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults on the Autism spectrum typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities. Based on statistics from the U.S. Department of Education and other governmental agencies, Autism is growing at the startling rate of 10-17 percent per year. Autism knows

no racial or social boundaries, family income levels, and can affect any family and any child. The overall incidence of Autism is consistent around the globe, not just the United States, and is four times more prevalent in boys than girls.

If you or your family are struggling to deal with issues associated with Autism, there is help available from the Department. There is a multitude of information out there to assist you or your family members who are impacted by Autism. We all want our children to have the best chance possible to eventually lead a life of as much independence as possible. The earlier you have diagnosis and appropriate treatment, the better chance your child or family member has to be a happy, functioning member of society. There are programs within and outside the Department that can help. The Office of Employee Assistance staff can refer you to Managed Health Network (MHN) providers that specialize in Autism. Outside entities like the M.I.N.D. Institute specialize in caring for and providing resources for persons with neurodevelopmental disorders. For more information go to: <http://www.mindinstitute.org/>

ACPD MEETING



The first quarterly ACPD meeting was held Feb. 2, 2010, at Valley Division. Graphic Artist III Terry Stephens, #A07714, was honored that morning for her newsletter and poster design contributions over the past years for the ACPD. Pictured from left to right are: Eileen Bark, Kathy Carstons, J. P. Hannum, Terry Stephens, Rochelle Lim, and Chris Sherry.

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

As the twentieth anniversary of the American's with Disabilities Act approaches, I wanted to take this opportunity to offer my support and request your assistance regarding disability awareness programs.

The California Highway Patrol has, and will continue to appreciate and support our employees and their family members who have a disability. We are a family, so what affects our employees and their families affects our Department.

One way employees can ensure the Department continues to be a state leader in disability awareness is to become involved with disability awareness activities and programs. Whether it is participating in one of the many disability related programs, such as the Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run or the March of Dimes walk, or being actively involved in the Department's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD), together we can make a difference.

I am a strong advocate of the ACPD, and extremely proud of its efforts towards improving the quality of life and increasing job opportunities for persons with disabilities. With your help, and through the continued hard work of the ACPD, I know we can positively impact the lives of all employees, including those with disabilities.

